



NIHVFC Newsletter

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Contributing to global science development by building careers

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5th International Opportunities Expo

By Drs. Gaelle Kolb and Hina Mehta

On May 15th, 2008, Natcher Conference Center was bustling with the activity and there was excitement and anticipation for everyone who gathered there. The reason was 5th International Opportunity Expo 2008 organized by NIH Visiting Fellows Committee (NIHVFC). The expo was deemed a success by both the exhibitors and the fellows who attended it. The lobby of Natcher center displayed information from 26 exhibitors who participated in this year's expo and it was sponsored by the Fogarty International center and Felcom. The Expo attracted an estimated 350 visiting fellows. The main goal of the Expo was to provide an overview of grants and research opportunities available overseas.

The event was kicked off with a welcome note by Dr Elizabeth Rex, co-chair of NIHVFC and Dr Roger Glass of Fogarty center. The participants later had a chance to

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Opportunities for conducting research in the EU

The Old and the New Tricks

By Dr. Gaelle Kolb

There are many opportunities available for European or non-European researchers who are seeking a way to conduct their research in a European member State. Recently, the European Research Council has expanded and it will surely become the Funding resources for research in Europe. Generally, the European Research and Education programs rely on two types of funding. The first is the so-called the "**people program**", which provides funding for Marie Curie Actions.

For any **European member**, willing to come back to Europe, can apply to the

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attended the plenary session with Dr. Steven Buchsbaum from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as the key-note speaker. Following in the afternoon, the exhibitors had the opportunity to present their countries' perspectives for supporting scientists.

Dr. Steven Buchsbaum is a Senior Technology Transfer Officer in the Global Health Discovery program at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Dr. Buchsbaum's presentation included an introduction to the



Gates Foundation and the Global Health mission, as well as a description of the new \$100M funding opportunity for innovative ideas.

He gave a profound view of the disparity in morbidity and mortality around the World due to diseases, economical differences and lack of action. He presented the Foundation's main focus on Global Health, especially by improving the health and saving lives among the world's poorest people. To achieve their goals they have developed programs with priority diseases and conditions enclosing infectious diseases, nutrition and maternal, neonatal,

child and reproductive health. Now, the approach is to foster basic and clinical research, to improve existing technologies and to accelerate the access of developing countries to informa-



Fellows listening attentively to Dr. Buchsbaum's presentation

tion and benefits of drugs or vaccines. They also co-founded large scale prevention programs in developing countries. The highlight of the talk, then, turned to Grand Challenges in Global Health, a program that had been implemented in October 2003. Dr. Buchsbaum described 14 proposed challenges encompassing the fundamentals

for health improvement in developing countries. The risk-taking, collaboration and innovative technical ideas conducting to breakthrough are highly encouraged. The Grand Challenge Exploration initiative starts with a fast-track grant of \$100,000 for one year, also opening opportunities for future funding. Topics are defined each year and anyone interested may sign up at www.gcqh.org to keep updated on future calls.

The Expo provided a great opportunity for fellows to obtain information on research, grants and job opportunities available overseas and in their respective home countries. Fellows

were able to network and establish valuable contacts for the next step forward in their scientific career. The following countries participated at this



year's expo: Austria, Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, China, Hungary, Poland, Brazil, Germany, Japan, India, Korea, Netherlands, Taipei and Canada. The afternoon showcased some key presentations by different agencies. The talks started with Human Frontier Science Program, which has been initiated in 1986 by Japan and today it counts 67 funding countries. Their grants are aimed to basic research and the proposals are at a post-doctoral level for long-term fellowship, short-term fellowship, career development awards and cross-disciplinary fellowship. HFSP also allocates grants for research and for young investigators. The main words are international, intercontinental and interdisciplinary collaborations. For more information, see www.hfsp.org. The representative from embassy of Switzerland gave very attractive propositions with funding for Advanced Researchers from the Swiss National Science Foundation. To know more details check out their link: www.snf.ch and look for Ambizione, SNFS-Professorship. Beside, they provide allowances for women delayed in the career due to children or change of residence due to partner career development under Marie Heim-Vögtlin Subsidies. Physicians also

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“Marie Curie International Reintegration Grants (IRG)” available. These are individual grants that are aimed at researchers from the EU and Associated States who have carried out research outside Europe for at least 5 years (can start at 4 years) and who wish to return to Europe. The grant is for duration of up to two years while the host institution will have to undertake to engage the researcher for at least three years in total. In 2007, the grant was a fixed amount of €25,000 per researcher per year as a flat-rate contribution to the salary costs of the researcher’s project at the reintegration host, such as salary costs of other staff, travel costs, consumables, patent costs and publication costs. All information are posted on the following website: <http://cordis.europa.eu/mariecurie-actions/irg/home.html>

At an individual driven-action, you will have the “Marie Curie Incoming International Fellowships (IIF) USA to Europe” which promotes the mobility of American researchers towards one of the European Member State. Marie Curie Incoming International Fellowships are individual fellowships that aim to attract top-class researchers from third countries to work and undertake research training in Europe from 1 to 2 years (incoming phase), with a view to developing mutually-beneficial research co-operation. In the case of emerging and transition economies and developing countries, the scheme may assist fellows to return to their country of origin for, typically, half the duration of the first phase (re-integration phase). **Exclusively for non-European.** You will find all necessary information posted on the following links: <http://cordis.europa.eu/mariecurie-actions/iif/home.html> & http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/home_en.html

There are also grants for Excellence available called “Marie Curie Excellence Grants (EXT)”. Marie Curie Excellence Grants (EXT) give promising researchers the opportunity to set up or develop their own research teams in Europe. The action helps enhance the careers of these promising researchers by helping them attain research independence more rapidly. This action aims both to retain the best European brains and to lure world-class talent back to Europe. More information is available on the following link: <http://cordis.europa.eu/>

mariecurie-actions/ext/home.html

The second amendment to attract European researchers back to Europe is based on the “**ideas programme**” implemented through the European Research Council (ERC). The European Research Council (ERC) is the first European funding body set up to support investigator-driven frontier research. The ERC encourages high quality research through competitive funding. The ERC complements other funding activities in Europe such as those of the national research funding agencies, and is a flagship component of the 'Ideas Programme' of the European Union's Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7). **Candidates from any countries** in the world can apply the ERC grants as long as they will conduct their research with on of the member States.

At an early stage of one’s scientific career, one can apply to the “ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grants” which will provide funding to promising young researchers to develop their project in any European laboratory. It gives the opportunity to young investigators to transition from supervised work to independent research. ERC Starting Grants amount up to 2.0 Millions Euro for duration of up to 5 years. The next call will be published in summer 2008 with a call deadline in autumn 2008. You will find more informations and the calls under the following link: <http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=65>

At a more advanced level, ERC is aiming to attract independent researchers with the “ERC Advanced Investigator Grant”. This grant allows exceptional established research leaders in science, engineering and scholarship to pursue frontier research of their choice. The focus will be on risk-taking and interdisciplinary projects. Principal Investigators (PIs) applying for the ERC Advanced Grant must be established research leaders with an outstanding track record of significant research achievements in the last 10 years. ERC Advanced Grants amount up to 3.5 Millions Euro for duration of up to 5 years. More information on: <http://erc.europa.eu/>

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have the possibility to apply to SCORE grants and scientists in social science, preventive medicine, bioethics or nursing science should consider PROSPER grants. Finally, the Public Systems Biology Research Initiative is a cooperative program accessible under the link: www.systemsX.ch. There were presentations from Fundacao de Amparo a Pesquisa do Estado de Sao Paulo to lure brazilian fellows to their home country. Howard Hughes Medical institute made its own impact on fellows by their talk. The session concluded with a Germany, focusing on the Helmholtz association, which founds research centers all over the country. This association allocates the Young Investigator Awards for 5 years of tenure-track with \$ 2 millions. Other funding opportunities are available from Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung/Foundation, Seventh Framework Programme, Deutsche Akademischer Austausch Dienst DAAD, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft DFG and Boehringer Ingelheim Fonds for Basic Research in Medicine. For more information, see www.helmholtz.de. If you wish to showcase again the slides from some of the speakers or view the complete list and references of the exhibitors, you can find them on the Felcom website under the following link: <http://felcom.od.nih.gov/subCommittee/vfc/careerFair.aspx>

Both the exhibitors and fellows were given an evaluation form to judge and comment on expo. The 26 exhibitors participants were overall satisfied with the exhibition format, the space allocated and the registration process. One caveat to their mind was the insufficient preparation of the fellows for discussing employment options. But, the caviar is that mostly all of them will return next year, none of them refused, and very few didn't made up their mind yet. From the fellows' point of view, around 1/3 of the fellow participants were Indian and Chinese, 30 % were European and 7 % of North American (numbers are relative to the submission of a feedback questionnaire). The fellows too found the expo very useful with a mean of 7 on a scale of 10. The fellow's crowd and business of the exhibitors throughout the day reflects the event's success. Many speakers and exhibitors expressed interest in participating again next year.

The NIHVFC would like to extend special thanks to Dr Sharon Milgram, Shirley Forehand and Lori Conlan (OITE) for their continuous encouragement and support throughout the months of expo preparations and the event day. We look forward to another successful International Opportunities Expo next year.

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index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=66

Will this comfort you in the high desire of the European Union to attract eminent researchers to their Member States. Remember that this list, obviously, is not exhaustive. You may also check each national research funding agencies for their specific proposals.

In Profile : Dr. Lilian Ferrer, GRIP Award Winner



Dr. Lilian Ferrer, a nurse midwife from Chile, earned her Masters of Science in Nursing and her PhD in Public Health at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) as a trainee of the Fogarty AIDS International Training and Research Program (AITRP) at UIC (5D43TW001419). During her studies, she became involved in research on HIV/AIDS prevention with Latino women in Chicago and also in studying the life histories and HIV experiences of gay men. As a student, she presented her findings under the guidance of Drs. J. B. McElmurry, Ramírez-Valles, J. Levy, and N. Peragallo at the International World AIDS Conferences in Spain and Thailand, as well as other conferences within the US and Chile. On behalf of the UIC-AITRP, she also conducted workshops on AIDS prevention in Chile for diverse populations including the military, students, and the general population. Dr. Ferrer's dissertation research focused on AIDS social movement activities in Chile. Her findings subsequently were published in the *Journal of Health Care Management* in co-authorship with Dr. M. Issel, who was her dissertation advisor, and her Chilean colleague Dr. R. Cianelli. The study, which used a community participatory approach to data collection and analyses, helped to set the basis for furthering community work in Chile around this issue and in building a network with non-governmental organizations and the Chilean Ministry of Health.

Dr. Ferrer's experience with successful grant writing and securing NIH funding began while she was still a student at UIC. She and Dr. R. Cianelli, who was also a UIC-AITRP doctoral trainee from Chile, collaborated as co-investigators in successfully applying with Dr. K. Norr (P.I.) for a Fogarty International Research Collaboration Award (FIRCA). The study extended research on mobilizing health care workers for HIV prevention from Malawi (R01NR008058) to Chile (R03NR009297). She also was co-investigator for Dr. R. Cianelli's successful application to NIH for a Global Research Initiative Program (GRIP) Award for New Foreign Investigators to investigate: "HIV/AIDS Prevention Intervention for Chilean Women" (R01TW006977). Later, upon completing her doctoral studies, she would draw upon both this experience and her dissertation findings to obtain her own GRIP award to study, "HIV Prevention for Chilean Men" (R01TW007674). This grant is under its second year and has been extremely important in understanding Chilean men's attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs around HIV; also, this study has helped promoting interdisciplinary research at the Faculty of Medicine and Social Sciences at PUC. In the fall of 2004 upon completing her doctoral studies, Dr. Ferrer returned to Santiago as a faculty member of the Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, School of Nursing (PUC). The university is regarded as one of the most prestigious universities in Latin America. With her Chilean colleagues including Dr. R. Cianelli, she also helped to found and now directs PUC's *Mano a Mano*: the first HIV/AIDS research based prevention initiative in the Country. One of her first accomplishments in this role was to obtain intramural funds from PUC to deliver HIV prevention programming to the university's nursing and medical students in the last year of training. Under Dr. Ferrer's direction, the *Mano a Mano* team of researchers, staff, and students is constantly engaged in ways to advance HIV research, prevention, and care in Chile. In addition to conducting cutting-edge AIDS research, their efforts also include promoting undergraduate curriculum in HIV/AIDS for health care professionals as well as meeting requests for continuing education. Dr. Ferrer and her team also are active in organizing symposia, presenting at conferences, publishing their study findings, and writing grant proposals in the topics of HIV, primary health care, and research ethics. Since returning home, Dr. Ferrer has continued to maintain contact with her mentors at UIC where she holds an adjunct professorship in the School of Public Health. She also holds an adjunct position at the University of Miami, College of Nursing and Health studies. During the year 2007, Dr. Ferrer was promoted to Associate Professor and received recognition as the best young researcher in her School.

Science Voices from Home — Canada

By Drs. Suneet Sukhla and Aurea de Sousa

The fellows had an exciting opportunity to meet Dr. Joaquín (Quim) Madrenas who is a professor of Microbiology and Immunology and Medicine at the University of Western Ontario, and a scientist based at the Robarts Research Institute on Jan 14, 2008 at NIH campus in Bethesda. He is currently Director of the FOCIS Centre for Clinical Immunology and Immunotherapeutics in London, Ontario and also chairs the advisory board for the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR). Dr. Madrenas provided the updated information on the job market and grant opportunities for fellows and independent investigators in Canada. He introduced the four pillar approach for the funding opportunities by CIHR (Pure Biomedical Research, Clinical Research, Population Health and Health Services) and mentioned specific details of each section. He also touched upon the regional differences for grant opportunities in Canada, the two types of postdoctoral positions in Canada (associated or not) and the increasing salaries for postdoctoral scientist and principal investigators in Canada. He also projected that in the next 6-10 years; a large number of principal investigator research positions will open in in Canada due more funding opportunities and a generation of retiring scientists from their current positions. One of the take home messages was that the opportunities will be many but will be targeted to scientists that can fit in a wider picture instead of specializing in a narrow research line. They will be looking for scientists who will bring new technologies and provide new perspectives. Dr. Madrena's "tip" for the fellows: Write a grant BEFORE getting a position but after being offered a position. The chances of the grant to be approved are minimal but the feedback of the reviewers will help to guide negotiations with the University and to reshape the proposal for the next grant. This was a wonderful meeting with an advisor who gave a very useful advice and 'insiders look' for getting better placements in Canada. We hope to bring more opportunities like this to our community in future.

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The NIHVFC is a self-governing body serving the interests of visiting fellows in their transition to life after the NIH by working to create opportunities for visiting fellows to maintain continuity in their research upon returning to their home countries.

We are on the Web!
**[http://felcom.od.nih.gov/
subCommittee/vfc/index.html](http://felcom.od.nih.gov/subCommittee/vfc/index.html)**